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MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

WILLIAM T. HAMILTON, SYRACUSE, N. Y.
....
1855.

Modern Necromancy.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, SYRACUSE,

ON

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY EVENING,

A. D., 1855.

BY

WM. BLISS ASHLEY, M. A.,

RECTOR.

SYRACUSE:
WILLIAM T. HAMILTON, PUBLISHER AND BOOKSELLER, 23 SOUTH SALINA STREET.
....
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Syracuse, March 2d, 1855.

Rev. WM. B. ASHLEY,

Dear Sir:—

The undersigned, members of your own and other congregations in this city, hereby unite in requesting the publication (in such form as shall be most agreeable to yourself) of the Discourse on Modern Spiritualism, preached by you at St. Paul's Church, on the evening of Sunday, the 18th February.

Without unnecessarily assuming to pronounce on any of the hypotheses advanced in the discourse, to account for the manifestations of Modern Spiritualism, we desire to express our approval of its frank and faithful dealing with a subject now sharing so largely in the popular attention and bearing so closely upon those great moral interests, which the pulpit is set to subserve. The ability, earnestness and candor of its tone, in our judgment, can hardly fail to commend the sermon to which we refer to the respectful perusal of all who are interested in the theme it treats.

Hoping for an early and favorable reply, we remain,

Very Respectfully,

Your Friends and Fellow Citizens,

B. Davis Noxon,	Geo. F. Comstock,
Horace White,	Jos. F. Sabine,
Arch'd. C. Powell,	M. D. Burnet,
D. D. Hillis,	John B. Burnet,
John J. Peck,	Wm. T. Hamilton,
Wm. Jackson,	Rob't R. Raymond.

Messrs. NOXON, WHITE, and others.

Gentlemen:

If you deem it expedient to give a wider publicity to the sentiments expressed in the discourse to which you refer in your friendly note of March 2d, I have no objection to leaving it at your disposal.

Very truly yours,

WM. BLISS ASHLEY.

"Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cure, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given?

Answer.—I will, the Lord being my helper.

Book of Common Prayer.
Form for Ordering of Priests.

DISCOURSE.

St. Matt., vi, 13.—"And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

When our blessed Savior was here on earth, He prescribed a form of prayer for the daily use of His disciples, in which are found the following petitions:—"Lead us not into temptation"; in other words, suffer us not to be led into such temptations as we are not able to withstand—"but deliver us from evil"—i. e. as the best critics paraphrase it, "from the Evil One." Our Heavenly Father will hear and grant us these petitions, so long as we are careful to refrain from evil courses, and walk only in those ways in which He directs or permits us to walk. But no longer. If we stray off into paths which He has not opened unto us—much more, if we wander into those wherein He has forbidden us to go, He will withdraw from us the shield of His protection, and abandon us to the power of our spiritual adversary, who, "as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter, 5, 8.)

Into one of those forbidden, and therefore perilous paths, we *shall* wander, my brethren, if we go and take counsel of necromancers;—of those, in other words, who pretend to hold converse with the spirits of the dead. For this is one of those superstitious practices which originated among Pagans, and has hitherto been confined, for the most part, to idolatrous nations—a practice which God hath expressly, and

under severe penalties forbidden His people to follow. Thus saith the Lord—"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards (those who profess to evoke the dead, in order to learn from them the secrets of the invisible world) to be defiled by them—*I* am the Lord your God." (Lev. 19, 31. See also Deut. 18, 19 to 24.) In the last clause, you observe, the reason for this prohibition is set forth. It is because "*I* am the Lord your God" that you are not to "regard them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards." To do these things therefore, is treason against Jehovah—a violation of the first and fundamental precept of the moral law; "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me"—a precept which is of eternal and immutable obligation upon all rational beings. Any practice which was *once* forbidden, because it was incompatible with this fundamental moral precept, is *still* forbidden, and for the same reason, to all who are bound to worship God, and serve Him alone. These practices are therefore prohibited to us, no less than they were to the ancients.

The penalty which was annexed to this sin, further evinces how abominable it was, and is in the sight of Him who declares himself to be a jealous God—"The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them (a scripture metaphor for idolatry), I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people." (Lev. 20, 6.)

To seek for messages from the "spirit land" through those who pretend to be media for their transmission, is therefore presumptuously to go in a way wherein God hath forbidden us to walk; is to run into a temptation from which we have prayed Him to keep us; and so to expose ourselves to the power of that Evil One from whom we have besought him to deliver us. To do this merely from motives of curiosity, when we know how expressly God hath forbidden it, is to be guilty

of that sin of presumption which, if persisted in, will cause our Heavenly Father to reject all our prayers, and to give us over to the will of our spiritual enemy. To go even so far as to seek communications from the dead at all through the agency of those who claim to receive them, is a fearful sin—a sin which should cause all who are defiled with its guilt, however unwittingly they may have committed it, to repent beneath the cross whereon that precious blood was shed which cleanseth from all sin.

But to go further, and turn necromancers, or wizards ourselves, my Christian brethren—to put our bodies, which, when we were baptized into the name of the blessed Trinity, were made temples of the Holy Ghost, (see 1 Cor. 6, 19,) to put our bodies or any portion of them, whether in imagination or in reality, into the possession, or under the control, or under the influence of any other spirits than the Holy Spirit of truth and grace, or to attempt to do so with a view, and in the hope of receiving messages from them concerning the things which shall be hereafter—to resort to any other than the Spirit of God for comfort, for succor, for instruction in righteousness, for guidance, for a knowledge of the condition of human souls in the unseen world, or for intimations touching one's own destiny in this life or in that which is to come, is a sin, not indeed too great to be forgiven, if committed unwittingly, and repented of and forsaken as soon as disclosed to us—but which, persisted in, amounts to treason against the Holy Ghost, if not to that blasphemy against Him which hath never forgiveness.

You are well aware brethren, that within the last few years, many persons have claimed to hold frequent and familiar intercourse with unseen spirits; to receive communications from them; and to be made in some way the media of communication between those spirits and ourselves. They claim to be the instruments of a new revelation, not indeed from the

Spirit of God, but from *created* spirits—from the souls of those who once lived here on earth.

Well now it is obvious that these alleged spiritual manifestations are either impostures, or delusions, or else they are solemn realities.

If they are impostures; if the persons who claim to be the media of communication between the living and the dead are attempting, for the sake of gain or of notoriety, to impose upon our credulity; to make us believe what they know to be false, (as, from what I have recently seen and heard, I am confident is the case with some of them, and as others, whose investigations have been more extensive than mine, are convinced is the case with a large proportion of them,) if, I say, they be vile impostures, then assuredly they come from the suggestions of no good spirit, but are Devilish—they proceed from the crafts of the Arch-Impostor—and his visible agents ought to be shunned and execrated by every man who either respects himself, or honors his fellows.

Or if they are simple delusions—if these pretended media are not impostors, as I have no doubt is the case in many instances—if some of them sincerely believe themselves to be instruments of communication between the living and the dead, while they are not such in reality, but are the unsuspecting victims of a horrible delusion—if they are deceived and imposed upon themselves, their delusion can come from no good spirit—whatsoever or whosoever the proximate cause of it may be, its ultimate author can be none other than that Evil One whom our Divine Lord denominates the Father of lies. If they be the deluded victims of his wily arts, they deserve, not our execrations, but our tenderest compassions, and our devoutest prayers—bearing in mind that we are partakers of the same fallen, fallible, and deceivable nature with themselves; lest we also, trusting too confidently in our unaided ability to escape all delusions, and so running presump-

tuously into the way of temptation, are suffered to be tempted above that we are able to bear, and fall into the same snare of the enemy.

My brethren, if these things be delusions. as many judicious men think they are where they are not impostures, they certainly are not trifling, but very sad and serious delusions; such as (so their history, however brief, assures us) expose their victims to fearful mental and moral perils. If they be delusions, they are such as have induced many professing Christians to renounce the faith and fellowship of the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ, away from whom they cannot be saved—and have already consigned scores, if not hundreds of their victims to the maniac's horrible doom.

But if these spiritual manifestations (so called) are neither Satanic impostures, nor Devilish delusions, but grave realities, as some alledge, and I neither affirm nor deny; then the question is, are they of natural or supernatural origin? It is the opinion of some intelligent men, who have given much time to the investigation of these alleged phenomena, that, so far as they are realities and not delusions or impostures, they are to be accounted for on well known principles of psychology.

Without either affirming or denying the correctness of this theory, I shall proceed upon the supposition that they are, as is insisted, the work of invisible beings.

Assuming this hypothesis, I ask, from what order of spirits do they come?

Now according to the plain and obvious teachings of those Holy Scriptures, which God hath caused to be written for our learning, and from which we derive all our reliable knowledge of the unseen world, there are three classes of created spirits, and only three, whose existence is revealed to man—three classes and only three, who have any intercourse with

our world, or in whom we have any practical interest—to wit: Angels, Devils, and disembodied human Souls. If therefore these alleged spiritual phenomena be supernatural realities, they must proceed from one or from all of these invisible entities.

And are the blessed angels, those bright, beautiful and powerful Messengers of the King of Glory, the authors of these phenomena? They did indeed descend from their celestial home, when Jehovah, God the Word, disclosed His majesty to man on Sinai's awful brow, and gave to him, amid terrors, a transcript of His Sovereign will! They did indeed, descend in innumerable hosts, when the same Jehovah, God the Son, was more sublimely manifested, in the fulness of His inestimable love, in the Babe of Bethlehem, the Son of Mary; when for us men and for our salvation, He was found in fashion as a man! They did indeed descend when the same adorable Being, God manifest in the flesh, our Maker, yet our Brother, began those mysterious sufferings in Gethsemane, which ended in blood and death on Calvary, whereby the sins of humanity were expiated! They did indeed descend when, at His mighty resurrection, He triumphed for us over death and all the powers of darkness; and when, at His glorious ascension, He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers! These were occasions worthy their attendance, and befitting their dignity.

But can it be that they leave their celestial abodes and come to earth to spell, as school boys do, only not half so well, by rude rappings—to tip tables, and thrum guitars, to write such sense or nonsense as human brains and human hands can write—to utter scoffing rhapsodies, or silly platitudes, or transcendental solecisms, for the entertainment of our idle hours, or for the gratification of a vain curiosity? or even for the purpose of teaching us, in such gross and clumsy manner, or in any manner, truths which have been fitly disclosed to us already by the incarnate Son of God?

Whenever angels have been revealed to man hitherto, it has been through no such rude, *infantine* instrumentalities as these—it has been through no visible medium whatever, whether human or inhuman; but directly, in person, under the form and aspect and in the garb of priestly men engaged in holy offices.

But not to dwell longer on this point; these pretended spirits do not claim to be angels, and therefore they certainly are not—for no *holy* angel would pretend to be any thing but an angel. These alleged spiritual manifestations cannot therefore proceed from angels.

They must then, (if they be supernatural realities, and not fictions, which, I say again, I neither affirm nor deny) they must proceed either from demons, or from disembodied human spirits. It is claimed by the advocates of this new system, that these manifested spirits all pretend to be of human origin, and that they evince so intimate an acquaintance with the earthly history of those deceased persons whose souls they pretend to be, as leaves no reason to doubt the truth of their pretensions. Now admitting the truth of these allegations—admitting that the supposed spirits do claim to be human, and that they are familiar with human affairs—it does not thence follow that they are, in truth, what they claim to be, except we deny that there are any *lying* spirits—any spirits who can seem to be what they are not; who, as the sacred Scriptures affirm of Satan, have power to transform themselves into seeming angels of light; and are acquainted, more or less intimately, with what occurs here on earth.

But the existence, and the operative presence in our world, of such lying spirits cannot be denied, without affirming that our Lord and His apostles taught some things which were not true—without declaring, blasphemously, that they were Teachers of lies. For they tell us plainly and in every way, in

their sermons, in their parables, in their historical narrations, in their biographical notices, in their epistles to the churches, in their forms of devotion, in their most solemn exhortations and warnings, in their predictions, in their maledictions, in their benedictions, and in their oft repeated miracles of mercy, in all possible forms of instruction I say, Jesus Christ and His apostles teach us, not only that there are lying spirits, who are permitted to take more or less cognizance of human affairs—but that they are allowed to tempt us to such an extent, that we ought daily to pray to be delivered from their dangerous snares—and that, from the day on which our first parents fell from innocence and bliss, through the seductive influence of their Prince, whatsoever evils they have brought upon our race individually or collectively, they have effected by means of *lying* artifices, and *deceitful* wiles. If then we receive the teachings of God's word on this subject as true, we must admit that, though these spiritual manifestations (so called) seem to come from disembodied human spirits, it does not follow of necessity, that they are such in truth.—Having attempted to deceive men in other things, by their lying arts, and not without lamentable success, we cannot be certain that Devilish spirits are not seeking to deceive us in this.

Since therefore, (supposing the alleged phenomena, to be facts and not fictions) though they pretend to be human souls, they may in fact be foul fiends who lie in wait to deceive, and are striving to get an advantage over us by personating those we love, let us briefly enquire, which is the more probable hypothesis, that they are human, or that they are devilish spirits?

The latter seems to me to be much the more probable hypothesis, and for the following, among other reasons which might be urged were there time.

I.—According to the teachings of those Holy Scriptures,

which He who inhabiteth eternity hath caused to be written for our learning, according to their plain teachings, the spirits of the dead have never been permitted to hold any such converse with the living as is here pretended, nor any converse at all except on two or three *very* extraordinary occasions.—On the contrary, the Author of those Scriptures, our Creator, Sovereign and Judge, has expressly forbidden us, under severe penalties, as we have seen, to seek for any communications from them either by ourselves, or through the medium of those who pretend to receive them—and hath inflicted terrible judgments upon those who have sought them. And since He hath forbidden these things, it can only be because it is contrary to His will that they should communicate with us, or we with them; because he deems it best not to allow any such intercourse between the living and the dead.

As a further intimation that the Father of human spirits does not allow them to return to this world after death, and will not till the general resurrection, our Lord informs us, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that the prayer of the former that the latter might be sent back to communicate with his five brethren, was expressly denied; and denied on this ground, that there was no need of any further proofs that good men would be happy and wicked men miserable in the unseen world, than those contained in Holy Scriptures; and that, if these failed to bring them to repentance, no additional evidence would avail to persuade them. The argument runs thus, you perceive—it would do the living no good morally and spiritually to send back the dead to hold converse with them—therefore Lazarus cannot be sent back.

Is it objected, that the spirit of Samuel was sent back to communicate with Saul, through the sorceries of the witch of Endor? But this does not invalidate our statement.

For it is not certain that the spirit of Samuel returned at all. All that was said and done on that occasion, may

have been effected by means of collusion, and the delusive arts usually resorted to by such deceivers. Such is the view which many judicious critics take of this case.

2. But admitting that the veritable spirit of the prophet did return, and was permitted to assume the venerable aspect of the body in which it once tabernacled, admitting this, and it makes nothing in favor of modern necromancy.

a) Because it was, in that case, altogether miraculous—a total departure from the ordinary rule in regard to spiritual intercourse. No such instance, so far as we know, had occurred before—none has taken place since, leaving these recent pretensions out of view. All that it goes to prove is, that the spirits of the dead are alive, and that they are subject still to the disposal of the God of Israel. It is not of course questioned that he has power to send back the spirits of the dead; but surely the fact, (admitting it to be such) that He exercised that power at an important juncture in the history of His ancient Church, to rebuke the waywardness of a wicked king, who in the very act was violating a divine prohibition with which he was not only acquainted, but for whose enforcement he had pretended to be very jealous—I say the fact that the Almighty exercised His prerogative, and sent back the spirit of Samuel to rebuke and threaten Saul under such circumstances, affords no proof that the spirits of ordinary men are now permitted to return in multitudes, on the most trivial occasions, and the most unimportant errands.

b) But this case, admitting it to have been real, was quite too dissimilar to those now pretended, to be the foundation of an argument in favor of modern necromancy. Samuel appeared to Saul and the woman, in human shape, and spake to him in person, and in the audience of others, so as to be heard by all present. Such things, I apprehend, are not claimed by the necromancers of our time.

c) But finally, this case is a very unfortunate one for those who refer to it in behalf of modern necromancy. For it was done in direct violation of the divine command, and was attended and followed by unmistakable and terrible indications of the divine displeasure—nay it was only because Saul had grieved away the Spirit of God, so that he no longer received the usual tokens of His favor, and because an evil spirit had taken possession of him, that he was induced to seek after this wizard, in direct violation of the command of Jehovah. The subsequent history of this rebellious King, and his miserable end, ought to serve as a solemn warning to those who seek after wizards to consult them, after the example of his wickedness.

The apparition of Moses and Elias on the mount of the Transfiguration, and of the saints who arose from the dead when the Son of God gave up the ghost, have been referred to, in support of modern necromancy. But these instances only prove, what no Christian believer is disposed to deny; to wit, that God is able to bring back the dead, and that He saw fit to do so on two occasions, when His only-begotten Son was bringing "life and immortality to light by the gospel."—These two wonderful events, like all the Christian miracles, do bear irrefragible testimony to the truth of the everlasting gospel. But they afford no more evidence in support of this new-fangled spiritualism (falsely so called), than they do in favor of Swedenborgianism, or Mormonism, or any other modern invention.

But to return whence we digressed. While we are no where told that the dead are permitted to hold any such intercourse, as is now claimed, with the living; but have the plainest intimations, that it is contrary to the will of God; we are taught, in the most explicit terms, that Devilish spirits *are* allowed to hold such intercourse with mortals. And now I ask, in view of these facts, which is the more probable, sup-

posing these alleged phenomena to proceed from any spirits, that they are from demons, or from the souls of dead men?

II.—But again. The Holy Ghost has no where predicted in those sacred Scriptures which He hath caused to be written for us, that the time should ever come when this bann should be removed, and the souls of the departed be permitted to hold famaliar converse with the living. Neither has He any where foretold, that any further revelations than those which have already been vouchsafed to us, and which are contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, should ever be given to man on earth—much less, that, if any were vouchsafed, they would be imparted by any other than the Holy Spirit of God, or in *any other manner* than that in which they were imparted to Moses and Isaiah, to St. Paul, and St. John. On the contrary, He has declared to us expressly, that the gospel contains the final and complete revelation of God to man until the second advent of Christ; and pronounced a malediction upon all who should pretend to make any new, or any additional revelations. (See John xiv, 26, xvi, 13; Colossians, 2, 9, 10; Galatians, 1, 6 to 10; Rev. xxii, 18.)

But on the other hand, He did predict that false Christs, and false prophets, and false teachers, and lying spirits should come and attempt to deceive. He did predict, that a state of things similar in many respects to that which we now behold, should arise, and that Devilish spirits should be its authors, though not without the voluntary co-operation of living men. "Now the Spirit" (the Holy Spirit of God, which was in the apostles) "speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith" (in other words renounce the creed, and forsake the fellowship of the gospel) "giving heed to seducing spirits" (to spirits whose aim it would be to entice them away from the path of life) "and doctrines of Devils" (or, more literally, doctrines by Demons, suggested by them) "speaking lies in hypocrisy"—i. e. under pretence

of superior sanctity and spirituality of character. (See 1 Timothy, iv, 1.)

Now in view of these facts also, to wit, that there are no predictions in Holy Scripture that any such phenomena as we now behold, should ever be produced through the agency of disembodied human spirits, and that there *are* prophecies, which appear to include them within their scope, in which they are expressly ascribed to lying spirits; in view of these facts I ask, which is the more probable, supposing them to proceed from any spirits, that they are human, or that they are devilish?

III.—But further. While the Holy Scriptures (which were written by inspiration of God, and therefore cannot deceive us) every where speak of the dead in terms which imply that they have departed from this world, have nothing more to do with its affairs, and have become inhabitants of another country "from whose bourne no traveler returns"—while the word of God speaks *thus* of the dead, saying—"The spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast downward"—"then (at death) shall the dust return to the earth, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it"—while they speak of death as a "going hence"—a "flying away"—a departure into Paradise—a departing "to be with Christ"—as a going whence we "shall not return"—while they tell us that we shall go to our lost ones, but "they shall not return to us"—that the holy dead "*rest* from their labors"—enjoy that "rest which remaineth for the people of God"—while they assure us that they are in the bosom of an ineffable tranquillity, a tranquillity not to be disturbed by the wiles of evil spirits, nor by the prying incantations of curious men and women, informing us that they are gone "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest"—that they have "entered into peace"—even into that "peace of God which surpasseth all understanding," and which He will not suffer to be disturbed or interrupted

until the morning of the resurrection, and then only that He may give them back their bodies, now no longer mortal and weak, and advance them in the integrity of their human nature, to still higher honors, and admit them into still profounder depths of His ineffable joy—while God's word speaks thus of the holy dead; and tells us, that the unholy are in a place of torment whence there is no escape—(St. Luke, xvi, 26)—while it thus assures us, that the souls of the dead have no such intercourse with the living, as is here pretended, no intercourse at all, save that of recollection, and of mutual fellowship in and through the church, which is the mystical Body of Christ, the only medium of sympathy between the embodied and the disembodied—while, I repeat once more, the word of God speaks thus of the non-intercourse between dead and living men; it tells us plainly, on the other hand, that, as holy angels have much to do with human affairs, so do the spirits of evil, the powers of darkness—that they *work* in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii, 2)—that they have sometimes entered into the bodies of men, and controlled their powers of utterance, of hearing, and of locomotion—that they have used the tongues of men to utter, in human ears, their own sentiments—that they have bereft men of reason, and made them fierce, and false, and foul, and fearful, and frantic with misery, like themselves.

And now I ask you, in view of these two classes of Scriptural facts also, which is the more probable, that these alleged phenomena, supposing them to be caused by spirits, proceed from the souls of deceased men, or from the powers of darkness?

IV.—Let me offer you, briefly, one reason more for the conviction, that if any spirits are concerned in these phenomena, they are Devilish, rather than human.

I deduce it from these three facts: 1. That we have no authentic account of any such thing as is here alleged, viz,

the soul of one man, which has left its own body, taking possession of the body, or of any portion of the body of another living man, and using it for his own purposes, and according to his own will—we have no authentic account of such things, except it be in the records of modern necromancy.

2. But, (and this is the second fact, on which I wish to fasten your minds for a moment) we *have* authentic accounts, not only in the New Testament, but in other contemporaneous and reliable, though uninspired writers, of the spirits of evil taking possession of, and controling the whole or a portion of the bodies of living men.

3. And now (this is the third fact) there are several very striking points of "resemblance between the phenomena alleged in those who are now called spiritual mediums, and the phenomena exhibited in those who of old were possessed by demons. In both, a mortal is placed between us and the alleged agent. In both, the mortal acts against or without his own will. In both, the effort of the unseen spirit to communicate is rude, and awkward, and nearly abortive. In both, the frequent result or concomitant, is insanity, more or less miserable. In both, there is a certain compelled homage to the gospel, and yet in both, an hostility to the gospel, avowed, or ineffectually disguised." (Bishop Burgess.)

Since then there is no evidence, aside from that furnished by these necromancers themselves, that one deceased man's soul can take possession and control of another living man's body—and since there *is* abundant evidence that evil spirits have done so—and since there is a striking resemblance in several characteristic particulars, between the psychical phenomena manifested in those real demoniacal possessions, and in these pretended human possessions, I ask you, in view of this group of facts also, which is the more probable, that these supposed spirits are human, or that they are Devilish?

I might show you were it not that I should exhaust your patience, by citations from the revelations (so called) of these pretended spirits, that they contradict directly, or by obvious implication, almost every doctrine taught us by the Holy Spirit of God in the Sacred Scriptures, and that it is therefore more probable that, if they proceed from spirits at all, they are Devilish, than that they are human.

There is one other consideration however, which I beg leave to lay distinctly before you, before I proceed to close. I base it upon the hypothesis, without affirming or denying its truth, that these alleged communications with invisible spirits of some sort, are, as is claimed, supernatural realities. If they be created spirits of any kind, angelic, or human, or satanic, then to seek for spiritual comfort, or for instruction in righteousness, or for religious guidance from *them* and their supposed revelations, instead of, or even in conjunction with, the Holy Spirit of God, and His written word, is to do despite to the Spirit of grace; is to impeach the completeness of the revelation which He has given us in the sacred Scriptures—is to call in question the sufficiency of His ministrations and operations in the kingdom of grace—is in fact, to embrace and attempt to establish, another gospel than that which we have received from our Christian fathers—another gospel than that which the Son of God came into our world, and into our nature to disclose, and make effectual to our salvation—and is to incur the double anathema, not of man, but of God the Holy Ghost—who inspired St. Paul to write these words—"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed! As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed!" (Gal. i, 8, 9.)

Inasmuch then as these alleged spiritual manifestations are either impostures, or delusions, or realities—inasmuch as, if

impostures, their source is certainly evil—or if delusions, certainly evil—or if supernatural realities, probably evil—inasmuch as, whether they be impostures, or delusions, or realities, or a mixture of all, they can do us no good which is not secured to all Christian believers infallibly, and immutably, and in infinitely larger measure, in the gospel and Church of God—inasmuch as they have already caused many to apostatize from Christ Jesus, away from whom there is no salvation, and extinguished the light of reason in many human souls—and inasmuch as God has forbidden these things, and denounced them as virtual treason against Himself, and His Good Spirit, and has threatened to set His face against the man that seeketh after wizards to be defiled by them, is it not, I ask you in the name of God, is it not the dictate of wisdom to flee these things—to eschew them utterly—to renounce them at once, and forevermore?

My brethren, as beloved children I warn you to take heed unto yourselves—to "see that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Beware lest ye "fall into the snare of the Devil, and are taken captive by him, at his will."

Beloved let us pray earnestly for ourselves, and for one another, and for our children, in the significant language of our solemn Litany—"From the crafts and assaults, and from all the deceits of the Devil, Good Lord deliver us."

Let *us* have recourse for guidance and instruction and comfort, to no other spirits but the One, Holy, Blessed, and Adorable Spirit of grace and truth; who hath caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; who hath regenerated us in baptism; who hath illuminated and confirmed us in the laying on of hands—who hath strengthened and refreshed our souls with the body and blood of Christ, who is our Life, in the sacrament of redeeming love—who hath helped us in our prayers, making intercession for us and

within us with plaints which could not be uttered—who hath opened our understandings to understand the Scriptures—who hath comforted us in our sorrows, and cheered us in our despondencies, and strengthened us in our weakness—whose

> "Blessed unction from above,
> Is comfort, life and fire of love"—

who doth

> "Anoint and cheer our *soiled* face,
> With the abundance of His grace."

To Him I say, and to no other spirits, let *us* have recourse for the supply of all our spiritual wants in this vale of tears.

Sheltered beneath His brooding, quickening wings, we need not fear the power of any adversaries. Fearing Him with filial awe, trusting in Him with a lively and a steadfast faith, and walking in the holy ways to which His precepts lead, we shall be safe. Endued with the "whole armor of God," the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, we shall be prepared for every conflict with the enemies of our salvation. Wielding these weapons of our spiritual warfare as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, as soldiers who own no Captain but Him, and follow no orders but those He gives us in His Holy Word, by His Infallible Spirit, we shall come off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through the greatness of His redeeming love and power.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.—Amen!"

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